

3.0 FORT WAINWRIGHT (DONNELLY TRAINING AREA)

Introduction

U.S. Army Garrison Alaska (USAG-AK) has proposed one major range development project, as well as several smaller projects on lands at Fort Wainwright's Donnelly Training Area (DTA).

The DTA is approximately 105 miles southeast of Fairbanks near the City of Delta Junction in Interior Alaska. The DTA consists of the West and East Training Areas and three outlying training sites: Gerstle River Training Area, Black Rapids Training Area, and Whistler Creek Rock Climbing Area (Figure 22). For purposes of this report, only the DTA East and West are discussed.

The DTA West is an 894 square-mile parcel bounded by the Delta River to the east and the Little Delta River to the west. It covers approximately 571,995 acres. The East Training Area is an 81 square-mile parcel stretching east of the Delta River to Granite Creek. It covers approximately 51,590 acres.

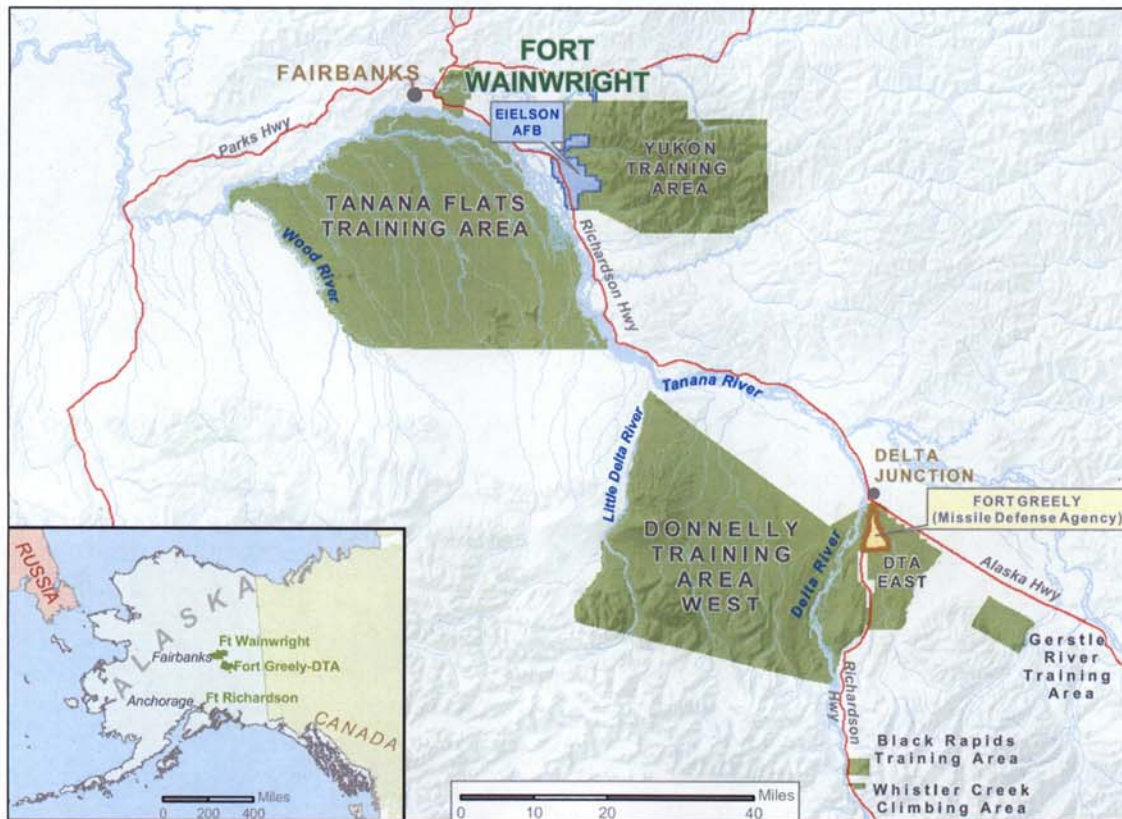


Figure 22. Location of U.S. Army forts and training lands in Alaska

The DTA's major range development project, the Battle Area Complex (BAX), is a range designed for gunnery training of vehicle-mounted weapon systems and dismounted infantry platoons, either independently of or simultaneous with supporting vehicles. There are three alternatives considered for the siting of the BAX project: North Texas Range (or Big Lake area), Eddy Drop Zone, and Donnelly Drop Zone. Survey of the construction footprints and parts of the firing fans for these three alternatives was

conducted in the summers of 2002 and 2003 (Hedman et. al. 2003; Robertson et. al. 2004). The focus of the 2004 field season was site evaluations to determine eligibility for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places for sites associated with the BAX project. A full description of the evaluations is presented in Section 3.1.

Smaller projects within the DTA included 3 road upgrade projects (Beales Road, 12 Mile Crossing, and 33 Mile Loop Trail). Archaeological surveys of the proposed projects were conducted in May, June, July, August and September of 2004. A total of 10 new archaeological sites were identified and recorded in the areas surveyed during the 2004 summer field season. Two of these sites were evaluated for eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places, pursuant to 36 CFR 800.

The road upgrades along Beales Road are located approximately 7-10km south of Delta Junction, and 1km west of the Richardson Highway in DTA East. No new archaeological sites were located along Beales Road during the course of the 2004 survey. Three prehistoric sites have been previously recorded within 1km of the proposed project area. However, there are no sites located in the APE for the Beales Road upgrade project. A full description of the survey is presented in Section 3.2.

The road upgrades along 12 Mile Crossing are located approximately 21km south of Delta Junction, and 1km east of the Richardson Highway in DTA East. Two new archaeological sites were located along 12 Mile Crossing during the course of the 2004 survey. Both sites were evaluated for eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, based on criteria outlined in 36 CFR 60.4. A full description of the survey and evaluations is presented in Section 3.3.

Road upgrades are proposed along 33 Mile Loop Trail, which begins approximately 1km south of Delta Junction. Three prehistoric sites have been previously recorded within 1km of the proposed project area. However, there are no sites located in the project area for the 33 Mile Loop Trail upgrade project. A full description of the survey and evaluations is presented in Section 3.4.

A total of 2,610 acres were surveyed during the 2004 summer field season, and a total of 10 new archaeological sites were identified. In addition, several sites were revisited to recheck site information. A full description of the 2004 survey, including new sites and revisions of previously recorded sites, is presented in Sections 3.5 and 3.6.